(c) what are the targets which were laid down by Government for poverty abolition during this period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES OF THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) and (b) The Planning Commission estimates the percentage of persons living below the poverty line at national and state level from the large sample surveys on consumer expenditure conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) at an interval of approximatley five years. The last such survey was conducted in 1993-94. The next large survey on consumer expenditure is being conducted during the period, July 1999 to June, 2000. Since during the first seven years of the current decade, the estimates of percentage of people living below the poverty line are available only for the year 1993-94, it is not possible to ascertain its change during the period. However, comparing two latest estimates, 1987-88 and 1993-94, it is observed that the percentage of people living below the poverty line declined by 1.8 percentage point in rural areas.

(c) No specific targets of poverty reduction have been set.

Removal of Regional imblances in NER

129. SHRI PRAKANTA WARISA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the position of North-Eastern Region districts with regard to removal of regional imbalances compared to other States: and

(b) the effective measures being taken or proposed to be taken by Government to remove regional imbalances during the Ninth Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF

PLANNING, THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES OF THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) Removal of regional imbalance at the district level is primarily the responsibility of the concerned State Governments. The Central Government, however, supplement the efforts of the State Government in the development of the Region/State/District through appropriate weightage for backwardness in the formula used for determining the Normal Central Assistance. The North-Eastern (N.E.) States being Special Category States receive Normal Central Assistance in the ratio of 90% grants and 10% loan. whereas other States are entitled to 30% grant and 70% loan. Special Category States are entitled to 30% of the total Normal Central Assistance. Besides. the N.E. States are not required to provide 15% of the State's share for Central Assistance under the Scheme for Basic Minimum Services. The N.E. States also receive Central Assistance under the Border Area Development Programme (BADP) and Hill Area Development (HADP).

(b) The effective measures being taken by the Government to remove regional imbalance during the Ninth Five Year Plan include meeting the backlog in the Basic Minimum Services (BMS) and gap in infrastructure. Keeping in view the special needs of the North-Eastern States in respect of BMS. Additional Central Assistance is being provided. To bridge the gap in infrastructure, all the concerned Central Ministries/Departments are required to earmark 10 percent of their Budget provisions for the development of North-Eastern States. In case of shortfall in expenditure of the Central Ministries/Departments, the unspent balance is transferred to the Non-lapsable Central Pool created for the N.E. States, to fund, over and above, the State Plan allocations for infrastructure development during the Ninth Plan.

Besides, about 80% of the Ninth Plan Outlay (Rs. 2450 crore) of the North-Eastern Council (NEC) is being spent to develop infrastructure of the N.E. Region.

Proposal to Downsize Government Machinery

†130. SHRI RAJMOHINDER SINGH:
SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards the newsitem captioned "Shourie wants Government to be Downsized" published in the Business Standard, dated 4th January, 2000.

(b) if so, whether any proposal to cut in Government machinery is being considered by Government;

(c) if so, the detailed outlines of the proposal; and

(d) by when Government have decided to implement it?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES OF THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARJUN SHOURIE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The Government has been alive to the need for rationalising its manpower and taking steps in this direction. The Ministry of Finance (Department of Expenditure) has been issuing instructions from time to time to control creation of Plan and Non-Plan posts. In August, 1999, instructions were issued by that Ministry to all the Ministries/Departments to undertake a review of all the posts which were lying vacant in the Ministries/Departments and in their Attached and Subordinate Offices, etc., in consultation with the

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.